



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC CONTINUES NATIONAL FRAUD AWARENESS WEEK ACTIVITIES *Day Five: Internet Modem Switch Scam*

Washington, DC – On Monday the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced it would be observing National Fraud Awareness Week (August 4th – 10th) by highlighting five topics on which it gets many inquiries and complaints from consumers. One of these topics has been addressed each day this week. Not all are frauds or scams, but all are topics on which there has been considerable consumer concern and confusion.

On Monday the Commission addressed “The Do-Not-Call-List Verification Scam,” on Tuesday it was “Cell Phone Fraud,” on Wednesday “Cramming,” and on Thursday, “Slamming.”

Today’s topic is:

INTERNET MODEM SWITCH SCAM

Consumers have informed the FCC that they have been billed for international calls that occurred as a result of using local (domestic) Internet service providers to access Web sites. The FCC wants you to know that we are monitoring the situation and that there are some precautions you can take to minimize your chances of becoming a victim.

Some Web sites encourage computer users to download software in order to view certain material. Unknown to that user, the downloaded software disconnects his or her computer’s modem and then reconnects it using an international long distance number. The result: the modem may actually be placing a call to as far away as Chad, Madagascar or other countries, and the computer user may be billed for an international call.

To prevent this from happening, don’t download programs from the Internet without reading the disclosures. Some Web sites may be advertised as “free and

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uncensored” or may allow information to be downloaded. However, a pop-up window with a disclaimer should appear. The disclaimer usually reveals information on possible charges or the rerouting of the Web site. It may say, “you will be disconnected from your local Internet access number and reconnected to an international location” (which may be Chad, Madagascar, or Vanuatu).

It is important that consumers read the disclaimer to learn what charges will be assessed before they click the box. If they still choose to download, consumers should be prepared to receive a phone bill with high international toll charges. There may also be charges from a non-telecommunications company that provides a billing service to the Web site in question.

To minimize the risk of this happening, consumers should get from the local phone company an “international block” on their computer line.

Filing a Complaint with the FCC

If you are a victim of this scam, you can file a complaint with the FCC. There is no charge to file an informal complaint with the FCC. Your complaint letter should include your name, address, telephone number or numbers involved with your complaint, a telephone number where you can be reached during the business day, and the name of your long distance carrier.

Your letter should also provide as much specific information about your complaint as possible, such as an explanation of the circumstances that led to your complaint, the names of all telephone or other companies involved with your complaint, the names and telephone numbers of the telephone company employees that you talked with in an effort to resolve your complaint, the dates that you talked with these employees, and any other information that would help the FCC to process your complaint. Your local telephone company also often has records that are essential to processing your complaint. You should then mail your complaint to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

To file your complaint electronically, go to: www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html. You can also file by e-mail at: fccinfo@fcc.gov.

Filing a Complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

You can also submit your complaint, in writing, to the FTC. The FTC does not typically investigate or resolve specific complaints, however, but rather looks for trends or patterns when an issue appears to warrant action. Your FTC complaint should be mailed to:

Consumer Response Center
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20580

FTC toll-free number: 1-877-382-4357

FTC e-mail address for reporting fraud: crc@ftc.gov

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For information on this and other topics of interest to consumers, visit our Web site at
www.fcc.gov/cgb

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the
Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on
www.fcc.gov/cgb/emailservice.html.